Through ice and darkness: the story of one accident and a new life

Chapter 1

08/12/2013

Today marks exactly three years since I took the position of police sergeant. When I first decided to join the police, the most frightening and dangerous situations formed in my mind — fighting crime, chasing the most dangerous criminals, heroic deeds. But reality turned out to be quite different: my work boils down to planning daily patrol assignments and checking reports — essentially office routine.

The salary is, to put it mildly, average, and my close friend, a police lieutenant colonel with a significantly higher salary and, not to mention, bribes, told me that in his position he wouldn't allow himself such complaints. But for me, it's not just about salary figures — it reflects my current situation.

20:00 I am in my rented apartment. Calling this place a "home" is difficult — it strongly reminds me of my position. My mother was diagnosed with
stage three cancer, and her full treatment requires several million rubles, but where can I get that kind of money? All hope, and I would say the responsibility for her treatment, rests on my shoulders since I'm the only breadwinner in our poor family.

Since 2005, my parents have lived in a tiny, rundown apartment. Back then, relatives predicted a brilliant future for me — a police general-colonel. But after three years working in the lower ranks, I haven't moved an inch forward — I haven't even become a lieutenant.

Today, when I visited my friend I mentioned earlier, I found another guy in his office giving my friend a bribe of about 200,000 rubles. My friend often talked about corruption in our conversations, but despite my words condemning it strongly, he seemed indifferent, like everyone else. No, I didn't plan to report him for covering up drug trafficking — he has connections all over the country and beyond, and why should I bother? You are in the headquarters of crime financing, you are at the police station.

Maybe I should have stayed in medicine. I used to work as a neurochemist in a regional hospital, but moving to another city forced me to quit forever. That's when I got interested in police service. I graduated from ******* University, but to be honest, I got into the police mainly thanks to connections — my late cousin once worked in high police ranks, and he helped me get the job before he was shot in his own apartment building entrance. Now it seems I'm stuck in this position forever — no awards, no praise, no promotions.

Chapter 2

12/11/2013

Two months have passed, and my emotional state has significantly worsened due to the monotonous routine and growing demands from my loved ones. All the money went to food, transportation, and medicine for my mother, but I couldn't afford proper treatment.

At 7:40, I stepped outside work for a few minutes to smoke and breathe some fresh air, trying to enjoy the moment a little. After a couple of puffs, I got a call from my father. When I picked up, I heard him and my mother barely holding back tears, expressing their dissatisfaction. It was painful to hear this from my family, painful to realize that they demanded more and more from me. But I could only give them a meager fifteen thousand rubles a month. I myself could barely make ends meet, stuck near the bottom of the police hierarchy, and couldn't even talk to the management about a raise or even a bonus.

At 11:30 PM, I sat in the kitchen at the table opposite my now-cold soup. My eyes began to water—unclear if from despair or because my salary had not only been cut but also delayed. I couldn't hold back and cried as if for the last time, tears wringing me until I felt sick. I moved to another room and sat at the computer, desperately trying to find any kind of side job. Nervously typing queries like "Part-time jobs in the city…," "Marketing courses…" and similar phrases, I gathered about twenty options. Not noticing my fatigue, I kept searching for a way out of this vicious circle.

At 4:00 AM, I woke up with dried tears on my cheeks and stomach pain caused by stress. Taking a deep breath in and out, I reminded myself of my plans to earn more. Opening the computer, I noticed a new notification. Remembering that before bed I had registered on various course and part-time job sites, I assumed someone had messaged me privately. Opening the message, I saw quite a long text and immediately knew who it was from.

Investing in drug trafficking—no way! More spam about drop points and other nonsense, and here I was thinking they offered me an internship…

I took some tranquilizers, washed up, changed into my uniform, and took the metro to work.

7:04 AM As soon as I entered the department, the senior investigator immediately joined me and informed me of something that was both expected and very unexpectedly upsetting—I was going to be fired. Fine. Do what you want.
They took me where they wanted to put me—PR Department. I greeted them, and the operator immediately, without unnecessary questions, told me everything and only at the end asked if I agreed.
A few days ago, I was accepted into the cartel's PR department. My task was to shape the platform's image, control information in the illegal media, create the necessary narratives, and maintain communication with the public so that more and more people would learn about the cartel. There was one rule — to do everything only anonymously. The work turned out to be difficult and dangerous, but I felt like I had finally found my place. Every day I learned something new — how to manipulate public opinion, how to create convincing stories, and how to build communication strategy. After two months, I had fully mastered the darknet; the currency there was bitcoins, which then had to be converted into regular money and laundered through ecosystems. At first, I earned about 90,000 rubles a month, then I started earning more and more, and my stable salary became about 200,000, but I still did not communicate with my parents and could not know how my sick mother was doing, although I tried to send money for her treatment through relatives.
This is not just a job in the darknet—it's a game of survival and influence. Now I know my life has changed forever.
For me, this job stopped feeling like something truly "illegal." I

followed all the security rules, changed my VPN every month, laundered my earned bitcoins in small amounts, and I had enough acquaintances in the darknet. Although I didn’t know who was behind the screen, I guess I could call it connections. I sat at home at the computer for days and hours.

A little about the cartel, which I got to know more and more. The PR department where I worked was a position just above couriers and transporters. I dreamed of getting the deputy director position, which was almost like being the head, and having good close ties with the IT team. Had I set the bar too high? Maybe. But this was the kind of job I approached with passion and a desire to grow.

It’s been two months since I fully settled in the cartel’s PR department. The darknet became my second home, and bitcoins a usual currency. I learned not only to skillfully manipulate public opinion but also to sense when to retreat and when to take risks. My salary grew, and soon I was earning about 250,000 rubles per month—a sum I could only dream of before. But I still did not communicate with my parents, and thoughts about my sick mother tortured me every day.

One evening, as I was about to disconnect from the network, a message appeared on one of the closed forums from an unknown user with the nickname “######.” He offered cooperation, promising access to insider information and a chance to climb the cartel’s career ladder much faster. It was tempting but suspicious.

I decided to take the risk and contacted him. It turned out he was one of the key analysts working for top management. He offered me to become a liaison between the PR department and the hacker team who engaged in cyber espionage and competitor hacks. This meant not only more money but also significantly higher risk.

Diving into the new role, I began to notice oddities. Some messages in the darknet disappeared without a trace, and my colleagues became more cautious in communication. It turned out the cartel had started internal purges. Someone from the leadership was suspected of betrayal, and now all employees were under thorough scrutiny.

At that moment, I received an anonymous letter with a warning: “Trust no one, not even those beside you.” My heart clenched with fear, but I understood that retreat was not an option. I had to play by their rules, or they would simply destroy me.

At the same time, I learned that my mother had been hospitalized. I couldn’t contact my parents directly—my new life

demanded complete anonymity. But now I was ready for anything to help her, even if it meant revealing part of my secrets and taking a risk.
My life had turned into a constant struggle—between safety and necessity, between family and work, between fear and ambition. But I knew one thing: I couldn't afford to give up. This was my chance to survive and change everything.

Chapter 3

12/17/2013

I started a paid internship and was formally listed as a communications engineer, but I was warned right away: "The money will flow through you. Your skills are far more important than just wiring and cables." I quickly got involved: my "work" consisted of channeling dirty money through official channels—it all looked legal, the documents were in order, the schemes fine-tuned. I took the internship solely for laundering. The first big payments arrived, and I grew used to the feeling of risk and easy money.
Soon I bought my first car, that very feeling of impunity—the roar of the engine only emphasized my new status. Week by week, I allowed myself more—parties, acquaintances, substances that I had been afraid to even say aloud before. My new circle only reinforced my fall into the abyss: the drive, the illusion of control, the feeling of being omnipotent.
I distanced myself from my parents almost immediately—it seemed to me their worries and control got in the way of living. Contact slowly faded away, and then tragedy struck: one night, on the 19th, I got a call informing me that my mother had passed away.
After my mother's death, I didn't feel the usual bitterness or tears—rather, an empty echo arose in my head, cold and dull. Neither grief nor pain, just irritating splinters and dull anger that everything around kept spinning as if nothing had happened. I remember sitting for minutes in silence, trying to figure out what to do with that indifferent lump in my chest.
My father fell into a drinking binge at that time, and his decline did not evoke sympathy in me. His fading seemed just another burden, an unwanted shadow of the past that made me want to never return home. There was no desire to help or sacrifice—only alienation and the wish to lock the door on all of it.
December 24, 2013, 05:20. I connected with what I had been helping to distribute so diligently. When I first took drugs, I didn't feel relief or comfort. It was like a short mental shutdown:

coldness in my temples, my mind growing dim, the inner voice fading. An artificial lightness appeared—the complete antithesis of the heaviness that was building inside. It wasn't joy, but an escape to the upper floor of my own mind, where I didn't need to solve problems, where my animal body could silently absorb a new dose without questions.

14:00. At that moment, there was neither pleasure in the usual sense nor happiness. It felt like entering survival mode, where emotions were turned off and my consciousness wrapped in a dull fog. I knew I was crashing, but it was the only way to not listen, not think, not feel—to shut down everything that was heavy and annoying. Afterward came an even deeper immersion into this emptiness, where only smoke and a vague feeling of my own decay remained.

I sat in my apartment, glancing at the computer screen which was frozen and waiting for continuation—something I couldn't leave unfinished. The walls—faded plaster, peeling corners, a cramped kitchen, and the only window through which the already dim yellow streetlight shone—gave no sense of freedom. Here, I was not the master of fate but a prisoner cornered by police orders, searches, and ruthless evidence.

Every sound outside the door made my heart pound, my chest tremble—the familiar feeling of anxiety and fear that did not leave me even when I closed my eyes. I wasn't going to wait for the moment they would come for me. But there was nowhere to go—all connections with old friends had been cut off, and I couldn't invest in new ones. Only one option remained—to run away. Run from the weapon of fate, from the firm grip of the law, and from the bitter reality I could no longer bear. I decided to run.

20:40. Gathering a few things into a dusty gym bag—a couple of T-shirts, a charger, documents, some cash—I left my laptop turned on, forgetting to log out. That tiny slip could cost me dearly—but I no longer had the strength to think. There was only one thought in my head: "Leave. Get out of here. Before it's too late."

Summoning my last strength, I left the apartment, feeling the cold of a piercing, deathly morning. The air seemed to squeeze my chest, and the asphalt underfoot was hard and uneven. I didn't know exactly where to go. Once sober, I would buy a ticket to another city. Somewhere there I could start over.

Approaching my car, I touched the steering wheel with a familiar sadness—my little refuge, both freedom and trap. Today, this car was my chance. But the inner voice kept warning me about the

risks, yet I couldn’t wait—time was running out, and I heard the call of looming consequences. I sat behind the wheel, pressed the gas. The wheels tore off, leaving behind the dry smell of rubber and hope.
Despite the fatigue, fear, and the invisible bullet in my back which I could feel with every cell, I drove through familiar streets, trying to claw out a new opportunity. Thoughts raced in my head: “What if this is a trap? What if they catch me? What if I end up in a coma, and all these charges just begin?”

Chapter 4

The movement around me accelerated, the streets melting into a uniform mass of light and shadow. I was breaking the rules, speeding through red lights, defying signs—the only goal was to get as far and as fast as possible. There was no time to steady my breath or gather my thoughts. Every second was invaluable, though maybe it was all just sick delirium under the influence of psychoactive substances.
22:05. Then—at one moment when it seemed like everything was under control—the road betrayed me. The raindrops from above had already turned into a sheet of ice. The car started to skid. The front gave in to inertia, the wheels lost traction.
I tried to straighten the car, steering in the opposite direction, hoping for a miracle, but the speed was too high and the surface too slippery. The car went out of control, weaving between poles and barriers, but it was already doomed. In my eyes—rainbow circles.
With a screech of tires, hellish tearing of metal and glass, the vehicle slammed into a concrete pillar, then into the wall of a building, throwing me forward, my head hitting the steering wheel, then—fog, darkness, bloody flashes in my eyes.
When I came to, the first thing I felt was intense pain all over my body and a ringing in my head, as if a bell had exploded nearby. I remember that zone between sleep and reality, when the world seems like a blurry blot, and pain is a dull background that recedes slightly with every breath.
About 23 days passed before I woke up in the coma ward. Later, the doctors said I was lucky: the coma was deep, but not everyone survives under such circumstances. Gradually, I began to return to this cold, cruel, and relentless world. One of the police officers came into my ward, and at that moment it hit me—I had lost everything.
The officer informed me that while I was unconscious, the police had searched my apartment. They found many more illegal

substances in the car than initially assumed—bags of drugs, packaging equipment, and the very devices that had given me away. The computer at home was still on, and it contained all the information about my “work”: records of deals, contact lists, money routes.

The search was thorough—they took not only the laptop but also ransacked shelves, cabinets, and drawers. Everything that could serve as evidence against me was packed up and sent for examination. I was told that the case now involved not only drugs but also money laundering, hacking, and organizing a criminal network.

I wasn’t there to resist. All I could do was wait to wake up again and hear the sentence. I’m sure that search marked the starting point for my quick arrest. The police got everything they needed to piece together my chain of crimes: from small sums to large transactions.

Around 12:30, when I woke again, officers were waiting for me in the hospital room. There was no pity in their eyes—only cold interest and calculation. I knew I would soon be behind bars. All my cards were revealed, and my attempt to escape had only tightened the trap I was caught in.

This situation became my ultimate failure—a loss of control and an inability to influence the course of events. The coma became not just a physical state but a symbol of my complete helplessness before the law and my own fate.

So, did I have a chance to change everything? Undoubtedly! But I chose the path that brought me to rock bottom, and now I mournfully regret losing it all.

Chapter 5

After five years of imprisonment, the protagonist was released early for good behavior. Two years later, he found a job in community service, where he managed to save some money and open his own café near the station, which brought him real joy. Over time, the café became popular among locals and visitors alike, and the protagonist regained faith in himself and a better future. He started helping others in difficult life situations, giving them a chance to find work and start anew, just like he once did.